THE OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS ADVOCATE

SMALL BUSINESS'S RESOURCE TO STATE GOVERNMENT

Lauren Plunk, Small Business Advocate Office of Small Business Advocate



Office of Small Business Advocate Introduction to the Office

- ☐ History of the Small Business Advocate
 - ☐ In 2010, the TN General Assembly created the Office of Small Business Advocate.
 - ☐ Lt. Gov. Ron Ramsey and then-House Republican Leader Jason Mumpower sponsored the legislation.
 - ☐ Senate Bill 3484
 - ☐ Tenn. Code Ann. § 8-4-701 et seq.



Office of Small Business Advocate Introduction to the Office

- ☐ Created to improve small businesses interactions with state government.
- Designed a unique office structure.
- ☐ Administratively attached to the Comptroller of the Treasury.
- □ Provides an independent check on the state's efforts to regulate small business in Tennessee.

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Office of Small Business Advocate Role of the Advocate

- ☐ Mission Statement: The mission of the Comptroller's office is to improve the quality of life for all Tennesseans by making government work better.
- □ As the Small Business Advocate, my mission is to make government work for Tennessee's small businesses.



Office of Small Business Advocate Role of the Advocate

- ☐ What is working better for small businesses?
 - Make state government more responsive to small business owners by:
 - Encouraging polite, easy to understand, customer-focused interactions.
 - Ensuring regulatory information is available.
 - Making regulatory compliance possible in the least burdensome way.



Office of Small Business Advocate Role of the Advocate

- ☐ The Office of Small Business Advocate serves as a point of contact for small business owners to state government.
- ☐ The Office provides information and answers questions for Tennesseans who are starting a small business or who already own a small business.
- ☐ The Office assists in the resolution of issues concerning small businesses and state departments and agencies.

Office of Small Business Advocate Definition of Small Business

- ☐ What is a "small business?"
 - □ The law defines a small business as "a business entity, including its affiliates, that employs **fifty (50) or fewer** full-time employees." *Tenn. Code Ann.* § 8-4-701.



Office of Small Business Advocate Tennessee Facts

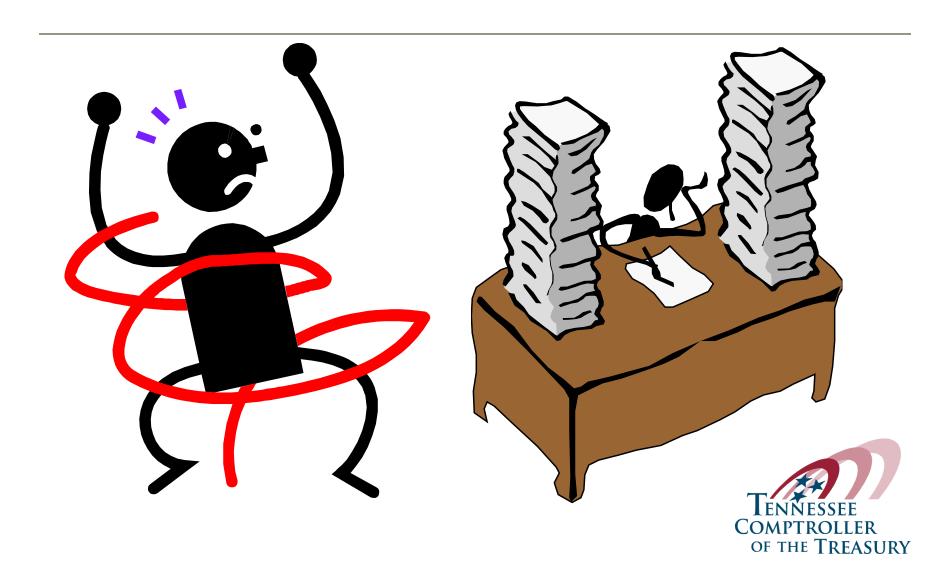
- □ 555,712 businesses in Tennessee.
- At least **540,000** of those businesses have **50 or fewer** employees.
- □ 97% of Tennessee's businesses are small businesses.



Office of Small Business Advocate

How the Small Business Advocate **Assists Small** Business Owners

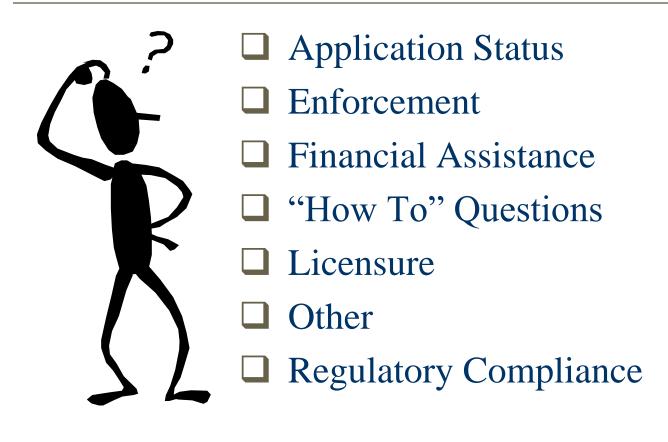
Office of Small Business Advocate



Office of Small Business Advocate Inquiry Procedure

- Small business owner contacts the Office.
- Contact in each state agency with regulatory authority over business.
- ☐ Formal v. informal process.
- Each inquiry is different:
 - ☐ Time required to resolve an issue, information provided to the department, and solution.

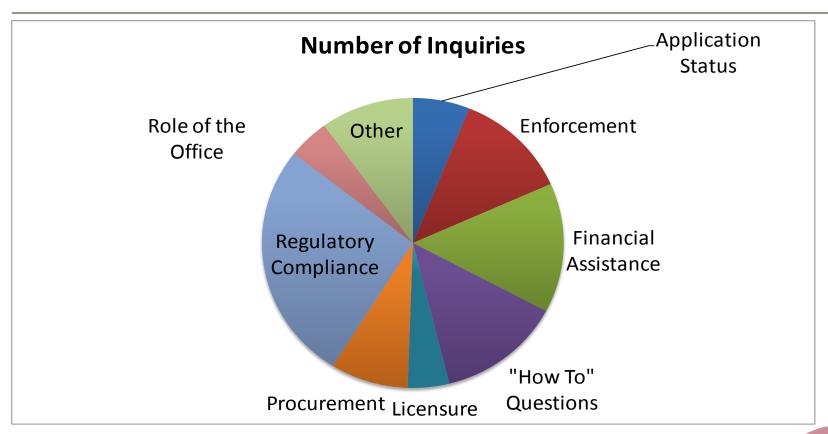
Office of Small Business Advocate Frequent Inquiries





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Office of Small Business Advocate Frequent Inquiries





Office of Small Business Advocate Frequent Inquiry Examples

- ☐ Application Status:
 - ☐ Filed X, Y days ago
- **□** Enforcement:
 - ☐ Audit findings; Payment plan assistance
- ☐ Financial Assistance:
 - ☐ Specific types of business; Grants; Loans

Office of Small Business Advocate Frequent Inquiry Examples

- ☐ "How To" Questions:
 - ☐ General information; Doing business with the state; Getting started
- ☐ Licensure:
 - ☐ The process; Requirements for a particular licensure; Do I need one at all?
- Regulatory Compliance:
 - ☐ Unemployment rate; Sales tax collection; Closing a business
- Other:
 - ☐ Local issues; Other regulations



Office of Small Business Advocate

- ☐ Small business owner seeking professional licensure.
- Small business owner has concerns over enforcement action including penalties and interest by a department.
- ☐ Small business owner needs assistance navigating the unemployment benefit appeals process.



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Helpful Hints for Working with State Government



Office of Small Business Advocate Helpful Hints on Dealing with State Government

- Communication is key:
 - Between different levels of government.
 - Between agencies.
 - Between a small business owner and state government.



Office of Small Business Advocate Helpful Hints on Dealing with State Government

- Understanding the Structure
 - Executive branch of state government has over 40,000 employees.
 - Over 30 agencies with regulatory authority over business.
 - Hierarchical nature of an agency.



Office of Small Business Advocate Helpful Hints on Dealing with State Government

Call the Office of Small Business Advocate!



Office of Small Business Advocate Contact Information

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